

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS
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NPO2|SPACE SHUTTLE|BROKAW: A big part of this story is the role of the
|2|press. Defense Secretary Weinberger and Air Force
officials have been saying that to publish or broadcast
details of the launch would jeopardize national security.
Today's Washington Post story on the launch described the
kind of satellite that would be sent up and its general
mission. As Robert Hager reports tonight, that touched
off a spirited, sometimes angry debate on the role of the
press.

HAGER: The Pentagon is investigating leaks from Cape
Canaveral. NBC had the story three weeks ago and the
Associated Press a few days later. But after Defense
Secretary Weinberger telephoned saying the story would
seriously endanger national security, both organizations
agreed to withhold it. NBC's news president, Larry
Grossman: LARRY GROSSMAN: No, I don't see how we could
have responded in any other way than the way we did. It's
a very tough call, because, obviously, it's a moment when
the right of the people to know and the importance of
having an informed democracy clashes with the national
security.

HAGER: Associated Press Vice President Walter Mears:
WALTER MEARS: You got two valid concerns, weighed the one
against the other and decided in this case it was
appropriate not to move the story.

HAGER: Aviation Week and Space Technology also had the
story and decided on its own that it was too sensitive to
print. But the Washington Post decided to print what it
said were parts of the story this morning. Editor
Benjamin Bradley said the paper 'kept out information the
Pentagon considered sensitive.' 'Virtually every fact
mentioned is a matter of public record.' Retired Admiral
Gene *LaRock, a Pentagon critic, agreed.

ADM. GENE *LaRock (retired): So I don't think there's
anything in the newspapers today that the Soviets did not
know today or will not know in a short time anyway.

HAGER: But Sen. Patrick Leahy, who's on the Intelligence
Committee, says that's not true. SEN. PATRICK LEAHY
(D-Vt.): If this article is accurate, then it's
extraordinarily damaging to the United States to be on the
front page, and it should not be there.

HAGER: Secretary Weinberger feels the same way.

SECRETARY CASPAR WEINBERGER: ...What's being done when
this is published is, is behaving very irresponsibly and
is actually causing damage or at least potential damage,
and I think, in this case, actual damage to the nation's

security. And I don't think there's any, any right to
know or anything of that kind. You're really talking
about the right of the Soviets to know.

HAGER: Now, what the Pentagon is investigating is not why
the story's been published, but who leaked it. Robert
Hager, NBC News, Washington.